

703 and officiate in the ceremonies, but it is perhaps true to say that only  
767 the beams for minor sacrifices (recovery from illness, etc.) are  
[292] killed by them. Hofmayer states that the distinctive mark of the  
301] *harat* is a necklace of disc beads of oenrich egg-shell, but that they also  
wear anklets of glass beads, white and green. The *harat* eat the flesh  
of the sacrifices and drink the milk of the cattle belonging to the shrine;  
they are responsible too for the disposal of the bones of the sacrifice,  
which they cast into the river.

778 The contents of the *longo* vary, but they always include certain  
306 sacred spears, called *alade*, representing those used by Nykang and  
his companions.

In 1910 we were told that one of the five huts of the Feniakang  
shrine was in a special sense the house of Nykang, which he was  
thought to inhabit. It was distinguished by a number of very rough  
[512] paintings on its outer wall, some of which could be recognised as  
representing animals, but we could not learn that the paintings had  
any special significance. Before the door of the hut were a number

[114]  
[23] of horns of the cattle slain in sacrifice (in 1911 wrongly described as  
elephant tusks), their broad ends thrust into the ground; whilst  
these were said to be skins on the floor, as if for Nykang to rest upon.  
Some of the "spears of Nykang" (*alade*) are kept here, and there is  
in this shrine an extremely sacred moon, which may be kept in this  
hut or may be preserved with some of the sacred spears and a number  
of elephant tusks in one of the other huts of the shrine,  
used by the guardians and for storing the millet brought as  
offerings when the crop is cut. In 1911 we were struck almost with  
the resemblance of the shrine to a homestead, with exceptionally  
large huts; it had been rebuilt since 1900, when we first visited  
Feniakang, and there were now no huts in front of any hut. At this

703 time (1911) the shrine had been entrusted by the king to the care  
778 of a most intelligent elderly Dinka woman, by name Aher—widow  
of the kings Kur and Fadier—who was the chief priestess of the shrine.  
She had three huts and a cattle byre near the shrine; in one hut she  
[569] kept her beer, and here millet was ground, the two others were for  
her slaves, who as well as her cattle were provided by the king. We  
are not certain whether she ever slept in the shrine. According  
[64]  
[643] to Shilluk custom Aher had left Kodich during her two pregnancies,  
but on neither occasion had she been sent to Feniakang; it is, indeed,  
improbable that a royal wife would be sent to a village containing  
a shrine, as it might be difficult to accommodate her cattle and those  
of the shrine attendants, as well as the village

## Introduction

## E117

is, that this will keep them from using abusive language. — Some natives say, members of the royal family do not remove the hair, but of this I am not sure.

## TRIBAL MARKS

The tribal marks of the Shilluk, women as well as men, are from three to five rows of dots across the forehead. The regular instrument for tattooing these dots into the skin is a wooden beam similar in shape to our scalp. But not infrequently individuals are met with who have not these marks. Sometimes women have from one to three rows of small scars across their foreheads. These are in most or all cases simply caused by wearing bands of beehive horns tightly across the forehead. Tattoos on other parts of the body are common.

## HAIR

The women wear either no or only short hair on the head; they shave their heads with a mass consisting of a straight piece of thin iron, whose edge is sharpened, or with a short piece of iron with one side beveled out to a thin edge. In making a mass they use almost any metal instrument they can get hold of for this purpose. Both sexes completely remove any hair on the body by pulling it out with a kind of pliers; the men even pull out their beard and eyelashes. — They do not shave.

## 301. HAIR-DOING

The men, slightly younger, indulge in elaborate hair-dos of varied forms. Each hair-doing takes several hours to arrange, and has to last for weeks, the usual occasion for receiving it being a village-festival, where everyone wants to appear at his best; in doing it, the hair is first loosened with a stick, which serves at the same time for smoothing the head. Then it is twisted and brought into the right form by means of a solution of gum arabic, and sometimes one dyes; from time to time oil or butter is poured on it. In order not to spoil the hair-doings while drying, the head is supported by such supports. Sometimes the hair is bleached either yellowish-red or grey. Bleached hair is generally not twisted or dressed, but is left standing out in all directions. "On the forehead of a fighting war." Bleaching is done by smearing a thick paste of ash, shells and everything on the hair and leaving it there for about one or three weeks. Another mode of bleaching is to rub the paste well into the hair, then gathering it up from the back, and bringing it forward, drawing it into the shape of a horn. While in this state, they must be very careful not to break it, but the hair is broken off. The same result is obtained by smearing the hair continually with cow-dung. These processes take the skin as well as the colour out of the hair. This bleached hair-like hair together with their red, the body covered with ash or white-ash, and the wear of eyelashes sometimes gives the people, in the eyes of one who has never seen them before, a rather frightful appearance. Boys cover their hair in little baskets, bound with red earth and the Gambia-shell, in stripes or rings, or also twisted into the hair, and

Occupations

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with rather long legs, a slender body, and large horns. The horns, while young, are dressed into most fanciful strange forms, this being the business of a particular craftsman, the "dresser of horns". Sometimes in a large herd one sees hardly any cattle with the horns in their natural shape. An illustration of how cattle are cherished and almost regarded as personal beings is the fact that they have almost as different names for cattle, according to their colour, the configuration or size of the horns, etc. Vide page 107. — Domestic animals are not butchered, except when sick or unaccountably old. Oxen and goats are killed on festival occasions, such as funeral or marriage meals, or as sacrifices to Nyikang and Jwok. Neither do they sell cattle; for a stranger it is practically impossible to purchase a cow or an ox. The price of a cow is about £5; an ox is half the value of a cow which has calved; a young buller has double the value of a cow. — Slaughtering a cow is done by cutting it with a spear in the rump, so that the aorta is pierced. The blood is collected and constitutes food.

The cows are milked morning and evening, usually by boys, sometimes also by old men, but not by women, the latter having nothing to do with cattle. The quantity of milk obtained is but poor. A gourd is the usual milk vessel. These are washed with cow-urine, which gives the milk an unpleasant flavor. They also wash their hands in cow-urine; but they do not mix the milk with it, as is the custom with Dinka and Nuer.

Each village possesses a common cow-dip, but into it the herd is put at night during the rainy season only, when its mosquitoes are very bad. The rest of the year they are brought to the dip yard, where they are tied with ropes to short posts driven into the ground. The cattle-court is a semi-circular enclosure; at the entrance to it there is a small circular place built of cow-calls and covered with ash, in which the young men who watch the herd sleep. A line of dried cow dung is kept smouldering all night in this place. Sick cattle are moved to the cow-dip during the daytime, to keep them out of the pen and away from food, but not in the night unless it is the season when all the cattle are bound. Many cattle die every year, from intestinal worms and other diseases. A considerable number of oxen are barren.

The cattle are herded by young men and boys. As soon as the dew has dried off the grass, the herd is driven into the pen. During the dry season, when grass is getting rare, the herds migrate to the lower and swampy parts of the country, where the grass is still flourishing; the Shilluk along the White Nile cross over to the east bank; those of the Sobat Shilluk descend to the lagoons north of the Sobat. In both cases they have to cross the river, which is, on account of the mud/ crocodiles being in them, not dangerous, and is therefore done with great care and accompanied by

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*Family Life*

XXXVII

428 The sons inherit the property of their father. The wives of the deceased father are divided among the children, who may, and in most cases do, marry them, except their own mother. It is said that sometimes, when a husband is very old and infirm, his wives put him to death, in order to get a younger companion. On inheritance vide page 113. INHERITANCE

517 Their chief amusement is dancing. The houses of a village are built in a circle, leaving an open place in their midst. Here the inhabitants assemble in the evening, stretching themselves in the warm ashes or on a skin, or squatting on a piece of ambach; several small fires of cow dung are burning and spread a smoke of strong smell, which is the best protection from mosquito-bites. DANCING AND WAR PLAYS

[36] The events of the day are discussed here, the tobacco pipe and moria put going from hand to hand. In the middle of this open place the trunk of a large tree is erected, in which the drums are suspended. With them signals are given in times of danger, but more frequently they are used to accompany the dances of the young people. These public dances are among the greatest events in the lives of the young Shilluks; even old men and women, though not taking an active part, are highly interested in them; sitting before the huts in front of the dancers they constitute a chorus, who accompany the transactions of the younger generation with loud acclamations or blessings. The dances generally take place during the dry season; they begin at about four o'clock in the afternoon, or, in case there is moonshine, later in the evening, and last from three to five hours or longer. As a rule one village invites its neighbour by a drum signal given in the early morning of the day fixed for a dance. On hearing this signal the young people show a great zeal in preparing their body, hair-dress and the ornaments worn on the occasion. They go to the village in groups or single, men and girls separately. Usually the youths perform some war-dance in full arms at first, in which the girls do not partake; they form a large circle in four or two rows, and while the drum is being beaten, begin dancing and singing war songs. The dance consists in jumping on the toe and at the same time moving slowly forward. These rhythmical movements are from time to time interrupted by a group of dancers violently rushing out of the circle, howling and shouting aloud, brandishing their spears with fierce looks, and performing mock fights or playing pantomimes, in which they exhibit very remarkable ability. Scenes from the hunting, pastoral and agricultural life are represented with such a dramatic vivacity that they richly deserve the applause they earn.

635 On a given signal, spears, clubs and shields are laid aside and put together in one place, and now the second part, in which the girls partake, begins. The latter have till then been waiting in a separate place, where the female lookers-on are gathered. Each girl selects her own dancer. First the men form again a

[57]

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## Kinds of white dura.

*döl* is very long in ripening.*döwök* maize.*mir* has a longer ear than *döl*.*röw* Ducha (panic grass).*döwök* "finger", has four ears, which stand upright like the fingers of the hand.*lit-döl*, *adöl*, *döföök*, *öföök* *lyok* ("kills the elephant"), *öföök*, *adöl*, *öföök-möök*, *a/mök*, *awök*, *chöök*, *döök*, *döl*.

The stalks of many of the white duras are sucked like sugar cane.

## Kinds of red dura.

The common name for red dura is: *hök*.*öföök*, *wöjöl-fö-döl*, *wöjöl-fö-adöl*, *öföök* ("the Nubian?"), *adöföök-fö-döl*, *adöföök*, *öföök*, *öföök*, *adöföök*, *adöföök*, *adöföök* ("of the white man"), *adöföök*, *adöföök*, *adöföök* ("lion's eye") *wöjöl* ("crow's eye") *wöjöl*, *adöföök*, *adöföök*, *adöföök*, *adöföök*, *adöföök*, *adöföök*, *adöföök*, *adöföök* ("sheep-tail"), *adöföök* ("horse-tail"), *adöföök*, *adöföök*.

## Agriculture Among The Shilluk.

By R. W. Tidrick, of Doleib Hill.

The Shilluk have hardly begun their agricultural life. Scarcely one half century ago they were purely a pastoral people. Only within the last decades has his lordship, the Shilluk man, begun to assume the burden of providing for his family. In these earlier days the task of tilling the small patch of ground planted annually in dura fell to the woman. Her hoe was made from the shoulder blade of a giraffe or buffalo, or sometimes from the shin or rib bone of these animals.

Boys tended the large herds and flocks, young warriors danced, went on the chase and raid. The old men killed their time away in the village.

But they say the cattle plague became more prevalent. The Turk and Arab came and took away not only slaves, but cattle, and so necessity forced the Shilluk to a larger village of the ground.

The change came naturally first in the northern end of their territory, where they came earliest in contact with the nomads and phalaris from down the Nile.

One man when questioned as to the food of the people in his boyhood days said: "We used to eat grass like cattle". There was as much truth as common in this statement. For even yet when the crop fails, the Shilluk women gather grass seed from the swamps and plains. They rub the seed of their winter's provision of seeds. A little sugar is obtained by bruising and boiling a certain root, which grows in the swamp.

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wooden handle. The hoe sits on the ground or squats on one knee or both, 241  
as he chooses, and catching the grass with one hand cuts it off just under the  
surface with the hoe. Shaking the dirt from the roots of the weeds he throws  
them into piles, leaving the ground clean and smooth. It is a good surface  
cultivation, suitable for this soil and climate, and when the season is favorable,  
the yield for the amount of ground tilled is very good.

The Indian corn grown by the Shilluk is a small early variety, which is in 243  
ripening ear a fortnight before the early dura is ready for parching. But  
before any grain is harvested a sort of first fruits' sacrifice is made, an old man  
and woman go to the various fields of the village and bring in some of the  
ripening ears of corn and heads of dura, and place them by the sacred house  
of the village. Some is later taken and ground and mixed with water and  
plastered on the side of the sacred tank, the rest is taken by the people and  
some put on the door of their own houses, and some is carefully tied up within.  
When the dura is ready for harvesting, the heads are cut off short with a clean 247  
shell and heaped upon a rack made of poles resting upon forked posts about  
two feet above the ground. After drying a month it is felled out with heavy 251  
clubs by the men and winnowed by the women and carried to the village,  
where it is stored in large barrel shaped bins made of coarse grass. The bottom  
of the large basket granary is oval, a grass band wrapped with rope is formed  
about the small base and resting in the forks of short stakes driven in the  
ground bears the weight of the filled basket and keeps it off the ground and  
free from ants.

There are very many varieties of dura. One man gave me the names of  
thirty-two varieties. It is probable however that the same variety has different  
names in different localities.

Dura is eaten in a variety of ways. The earliest heads are simply thrown 252  
on the fire and roasted. It is often merely boiled till softened and eaten so.  
A great deal is made into a mild beer and used as a regular food drink. The  
popular way of cooking it is to grind it into a fine meal and cook it into a  
mush and eat it with milk, or cook it up with meat. It is sometimes boiled  
with beans, and sometimes is often eaten with it. A sort of dura bread is also  
made.

The Shilluk retains all of his pastoral instincts and prizes his flocks and herds 253  
above all else. His sheep are very inferior in size and have no wool where  
wool ought to grow. His goats are small and few are good milk producers.  
His cows are also generally poor in milking qualities, but are fair in size and  
in beef conformation. They belong to the Indian breed of cattle, which have  
the hump on the withers.

Many things are denied to the young man who has not been properly initiated. He cannot take part in the formal dances, though he may join in the moonlight dances of the children. He is debarred from that pursuit so dear to the heart of the small boy, that is, he is not permitted to go to their tribal fights. However, he enjoys immunity from danger in these fights, as women and boys who have not danced are placed in the same class; it is a disgrace to kill them. In the few cases that I have known of small lads being killed, the ones who did the killing insisted that it was a mistake—that either the weapon had miscarried or they had mistaken the lad for someone else. Some timid lads may delay their initiation through fear, but to the majority it is a challenge to claim the full rights of men. The boy who has not danced is not permitted to wear the large necklaces made from the heavy hairs of the giraffe tail. He may wear a band of a few hairs, but the large ones called *win* are forbidden to him. He is also forbidden to wear the *reb*, the beads made from the eggshell of the ostrich. He is not permitted to use "*ajjo*" on his hair. This is a brick-like substance made by taking the cleansing from the floor of the stable in the morning, and then dried cow dung is put with it, and the resulting mixture is made into a loaf and burned with cow dung. It has a brick-like appearance when finished. It is then powdered. The young man puts oil on his head. The dust is poured on his head, and he keeps shaking his head to get it to form little balls. Other red preparations for the head may be used by the small boys. The lad who has not danced is not permitted to wear the skins of the various members of the cat tribe that the men wear at fights and dances. Finally, he is not permitted to make a formal call on the young ladies until after he has danced, and he is not granted any political rights in the village council.

The ages at the time of initiation vary. A strong lad is initiated at an earlier age than a weakling. The older men say that boys dance at an earlier age than they did formerly. The average age now is perhaps fifteen years. Some of the older men say it used to be at least twenty years. When all the older males in a family are dead a boy may be initiated younger so that he can inherit the property of his father, and also to give the family representation in the civic life of the village. Initiations may occur at both the spring and autumn dances. Those initiated the same year have a feeling of relationship for others of the same

## THE SHILLUK TRIBE

9

The homesteads are arranged in roughly

horse-shoe shape around an open space in which are tethered the sheep and cattle of the hamlet. Within this space is usually a very large hut (baal) used for animals in the rains and throughout the year as a guest-house and general village club. There is also usually a normal sized hut, with no surrounding fence, known as the *gwi*, which is used as a dormitory by the unmarried men. In this hut are put the ashes of the cattle dung with which the young men cover themselves at night for warmth and protection from flies. Some villages have a tree in the central circle, but more often there is a complete and inhospitable absence of shade.

The homestead (*gal*) consists of two huts between which is an area enclosed by a fence of dura stalks or rough grass matting. The family group inhabiting the homestead is called also (presumably by transference) *gal*, and it is in this latter sense that the word *gal* will be used in this note.

In this sense *gal* is the smallest (though important) social unit in the tribe. An unmarried man does not own a homestead. All unmarried persons live in the homestead and adhere to the *gal* of their father. If their father is dead they adhere to the *gal* of their eldest married brother or, if they have none, to their deceased father's (married) brother. The owner of the homestead to which they adhere is the leader of their *gal*, and as such is responsible for the behaviour of its members. This vicarious responsibility on the part of the *gal* leader is a corollary to the principles of the ownership of cattle (and sheep). The cattle of the *gal* are owned and disposed of by the *gal* leader alone, and since the remedy for a wrong is a payment of cattle it follows that he and not the actual malefactor is held responsible. The position resembles that of the Roman family where the paterfamilias alone is *rei familiae*, all others being *alieni familiae*. The Shilluk *filii familiae*, however, become *rei familiae* on marriage which the Roman son did not. The vicarious responsibility of the *gal* leader has the convenient aspect that the *gal* leader is more easily found by the arms of the law than the actual malefactor because of the fact that he owns a homestead.

PART I.—DEATH AND BURIAL OF RETH FAFITI YOR.

643 Reth Fafiti Yor had been unwell for a month or two before September 1943, but custom did not permit him to acknowledge the fact, or tell people about it. The news of his illness became public early in September. He was being attended by a Shilluk medical assistant, but it was evident that his illness was becoming more serious and was not as simple as had been hoped. In the middle of the month the *reth* was visited by a British doctor, who diagnosed an intestinal obstruction, which might or might not be cancer. The *reth* did not wish to come to Malakal hospital, and the doctor saw no good reason to persuade him. He decided that he should stay under observation for a month. Some days later news began to come in that his condition was much worse; and in the afternoon of the 21st a message arrived in Malakal that the *reth* was unlikely to last the night. In fact, by the time the message arrived the *reth* was dead.

[195] *Piny lugye*—"There is no land—the Shilluk country has ceased to be."

26 The day after the *reth* died he was laid in state in the house at Fashoda where he had passed away. The body lay on a mattress on its right side shrouded in white cloth. Some eight or nine women were fanning the corpse with fans made from the wings of wild geese. [207] The women were the daughters of the *reth* and the daughters of *reth* Fadiet. [213] None of the *reth*'s wives were there. [644] Two small gourds of water were placed by the knees of the body. The part of the house in which the body lay was screened off by grass mats made by the *reth*'s wives some three feet high, and above the mat was a curtain of white cloth, which was drawn aside for people as they paid their last respects. There were no signs of mourning or weeping at Fashoda.

The next night the body of the *reth* was carried secretly to Goshaney five miles north of Fashoda, where it was at once buried in the *reth*'s private village in the house of his senior wife. It is traditional for the *reth*'s body to be sealed into a Shilluk house near Fashoda and not buried for a year after his death. Reth Fafiti on his deathbed expressed

## INSTALLATION OF BATH KILN.

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Then Nyikang emerged from his shrine in an angry mood. The people fell in procession behind the effigies and, dancing and singing, circled the shrine and then set off for the *gal Onger* where the whips of the *Arke* Nyikang are stored. Both Nyikang and Dak entered this house, and when they came out again a third effigy, that of Cal,\* was with them. Cal was the brother of Dak and his effigy is made with grey (female) ostrich feathers in contrast to the black feathers of the others. The drum began to beat louder and faster, the singing increased in tempo and all the time the crowds gathered. Simultaneously at the other end of Fadera, the *rev's* forces were gathering round the mound, the *rev's* police in their scarlet *lao* again conspicuous on the left flank.

There followed a succession of rallies by the assembled forces of Nyikang and the *rev* from opposite ends of the capital. First Nyikang would surge forward and the shield-bearer of the *rev* would conduct the temporary retirement of the *rev's* forces, routing the bells inside the shield in defiance of Nyikang. Then it would be the turn of the *rev's* followers to advance menacingly and for Nyikang to withdraw in the same manner. Finally a bull was brought forward to be cut on the ground so that the *rev* could step over it before going on to seize *Nyakur*.<sup>2</sup> Once again the cutting was mismanaged and with a disdainful wave of his hand, the *rev* motioned to his men to drag the bull out of the way, and swept on to seize *Nyakur* from the clutches of Nyikang. Miller walks began to fly and as the *rev's* party returned to the safety of *Arke*, an unsuccessful counter-attack was staged by Nyikang. In failure was obvious and the drummer then beat the retreat of Nyikang and his men towards the shrine. They did not enter it immediately and although Nyikang had never reached the summit of the mound, he and his followers marched round the shrine and appeared to be about to enter the omulaghe. Such forces of the *rev* as remained on the ground seemed to melt away into the host of Nyikang, but somehow the new attack never materialized, despite much drumming and singing, marching and counter-marching for a period of some ten minutes, while the *rev's* guard stood watch on the slopes of *Arke*. Nyikang, tired of the proceedings, finally withdrew into his shrine, while Dak, Cal and his supporters, perhaps disappointed, gathered outside to sing and dance his praises. The battle for *Nyakur* had ended.

## Speech Day

The signal of events on this occasion followed former precedents. The *rev* came down from *Arke* surrounded by the *arke* and sat down on the ground and, while a fan made from one wing of a saddle bill duck was held to shade him. He did not, however, step over a sheep as had happened at previous installations. The chiefs of the country, with the exception of those from the east bank who had been discouraged from attending on account of the epidemic of cough-spinal meningitis there, sat opposite the *rev* on the ground at about twenty-five yards distance.

\* See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78, Note 21.

## Shilluk Life

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the place very inviting, or, if one must enter, tempt one to linger. One is happy to conclude one's business and escape to the comfort of the hut opposite. 342

This is the living and sleeping hut, and is usually much more clean and tidy than the other. The hard earth floor is neatly smoothed over with mud and carefully swept. Several cow hides hang on the walls or rest against them, and one of these is placed for the visitor to sit upon crouched, or a small platform made of light ambac wood may be brought forward for his accommodation. Lying against the wall is also the tall war shield of toughened hippopotamus hide belonging to the master of the house and his two spears, one his fighting spear, seven feet in length with a broad, smooth, highly polished, leaf-shaped blade on a straight, slender shaft of brown wood; the other his fishing spear, a foot shorter in length and with a long, narrow, triangular blade armed with ugly, serrated barbs. Inside the hut we may find several men; some sit in the neat way the Shilluk have with one foot tucked beneath them, a posture impossible for a stiff-jointed European, but one which they can maintain for long periods without the slightest discomfort. The host is dispensing beer to his guests from a large pot placed in the centre of the floor, and a generous bowl, holding about a quart, will be offered to you. This beer is made from fermented millet, and looks, and tastes, rather like cold cocoa. Courtesy demands that you take some, so you sip a little slowly, balance the bowl in your lap for a while, take another small drink and hand the bowl to your neighbour who finishes it off with avidity. You linger over a cigarette while the others pass round a pipe filled with rank, home-grown tobacco, or, if this is scarce, with charcoal. A Shilluk pipe has a large bowl made of clay, fire baked, fancifully carved and picked out in red and white and black; into this is fitted a wooden stem, two feet long and an inch in diameter, with a bulbous mouthpiece made from the stem of a gourd. With a complete disregard for hygiene a member of the party takes the pipe from the man next to him, puts it to his mouth, sucks vigorously for a few moments, his cheeks going in and out 342  
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463 stalks of millet, binding them together with ropes which he  
 524 makes of grass. The same grass provides him with the  
 [288] thatch for the roof, mats for his door, ropes of varying  
 strength to tether his goats and cattle, and a rope of great  
 thickness and strength to assist him in the dangerous sport  
 of hunting the hippopotamus. From reeds gathered by the  
 riverside he weaves grain baskets and fish traps. If a cow of  
 463 his falls sick he can act as a veterinary doctor, and if he fails  
 [282] to effect a cure for the animal, he is quite competent at least  
 [323] to cure its hide! He makes his own pottery, beautifully  
 [45] symmetrical and balanced, without the aid of a wheel, and  
 [284] fires it in an earth oven, and grows the calabashes which  
 [28] provide him with drinking bowls. He can turn his hand to  
 shoemaking, fashioning a clumsy but serviceable sandal from  
 hippopotamus hide and cow skin by using his spear blade  
 very cleverly as both knife and awl. When his work is done  
 he will fill his home-made pipe with tobacco he has grown  
 and cured himself and gratefully drink the beer that his able  
 wife has brewed for him. There are, naturally, some among  
 them who are more gifted than others, or who show a special  
 aptitude in some particular craft and therefore specialise in  
 it. Thus, a Shilluk householder who wishes to have a superior  
 type of thatching on his house will call in an expert to do it;  
 yet such experts are comparatively few, because they are  
 unnecessary in a community where each one is brought up  
 to do everything for himself, and has no other work to  
 prevent him from living a communal tribal life in full. The  
 one craft that is completely exercised by a special few is that  
 [320] of the blacksmith, and this because ironwork is so small a  
 [411] need in the life of the Shilluk. It is true that his two spears  
 [412] and the small hoe he uses for cultivation are indispensable  
 to him, but once he acquires them they last a lifetime,  
 and it would be a waste for him to collect the—to him—  
 elaborate and expensive tools of the blacksmith's trade for  
 which he would seldom, or never, have use. If ever he  
 [437] needs a new spear or hoe he will, by buying or bartering,  
 [438] obtain it from the local smith, or—as is more likely in  
 these modern days—make his way to the nearest Arab

## Shilluk Life

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the roar of voices and the clashing of weapons might well make him apprehensive that he would soon find himself on the scene of a bloody battle between two rival villages. However, the reality would prove such fears unfounded, for he would merely discover that the dance was on, and that Shilluk youth was taking an afternoon off to enjoy itself. The Shilluk is fonder of dancing, we may suppose, than of anything else in the world. He will walk, or rather run and leap and jump, for miles to a place where dancing is to take place; and as he goes along he will lift his unmusical voice in raucous song, or give vent to blood-curdling whoops, springing high into the air and lunging with his spear at imaginary foes. Then for the next two or three hours he will bruise his great flat feet by pounding them on the ground, and yell himself hoarse, yet return home at the end of it not a bit less exuberant than when he set off. It may be the rainy season when the food stores are at their lowest level, and he will return home to a damp, fireless hut and an empty food bowl, but he does not mind; if he cannot eat and drink, at least he can make merry, and the dance will continue tomorrow and the day after too.

The day of his first dance marks a high light in the life of a Shilluk boy. Up to this he has been a wistful onlooker, a mere boy among other boys, whose occupation has been the minding of sheep and goats, the cleaning out of the cattle byre, the fetching and carrying for his betters; now, however, he has become as good as they are. He may dye his cloth as red and do up his hair as elaborately as they; carry real spears, not just some blunted cast-off a good-natured elder brother has given him; sit in council among his equals; take up his good new spear, if necessary, in defence of his village or his tribe.

On the day of the dance therefore, he attires himself with great care; his body shines with oil and is liberally powdered with red ochre; his hair is dressed in the way beloved of Shilluk youth; since 'tails' are *de rigueur* for these functions, he wears them: an antelope skin bound round his waist by a coloured sash with two strips of skin from the legs hanging

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*Mission on the Nile*

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down at the back; round his neck, instead of a white tie, he wears a collar of discs cut from the shell of an ostrich egg and a necklet of hair from the tail of a giraffe; his face is painted in some tasteful design in red, white and blue; his arms are loaded with all the beads he possesses or can beg, borrow or steal, and if he can fasten a large clanging bell to one elbow, he is extra pleased; his legs are cross-gartered with strings of metal shells, the size and shape of mussel shells, which give a most satisfying clashing sound when he moves; in his right hand he carries the three-foot long dancing stick of brown wood adorned at the top with two lugs of leather, in his left he grasps his dancing shield, a short, thick cylinder of ambach wood. Thus accoutred, he takes his beautiful new spear in the hand which holds the dancing stick, and with great pride sets out, surrounded by a bevy of admiring females, to join a number of his fellow dancers. Some of these are neophytes like himself, others have long since tasted the sweetness of the initiation dance, but all are picturesquely garbed and bedecked in the same way. In single file they proceed, running and yelling, leaping and whooping, towards the distant village where the drums are already beginning to throb and to which noisy throngs are converging from all sides. The girls follow on, no less excited than their brothers and sweethearts, and as they run along they give vent to their feelings in shrill ululations. They are more soberly dressed than the gorgeous males; an animal skin or a dark blue cloth is fastened on one shoulder and falls to the knees; they have anointed themselves with oil, put on their best beads, and perhaps smeared a little red dust on the top of their heads and touched up their faces with a little paint. Yet they need not worry that lack of charm or beauty will mean a lack of partners; if there are to be any wallflowers at the dance, they will be among the men, for every girl will have her beau. Nor need they have any misgivings about not knowing the correct steps; a leap upwards and backwards in time with the beat of the drums and a half turn to right and left with every dozen steps is all that is required. It is not grace of move-

*Minister at the Nile*

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643 reth, no building may be done and the usual burning off of  
 [535] the grass in the early dry season is forbidden.

649 During this time also active preparations are on foot for the  
 796 ceremonies of installation. Iron must be obtained and

796 special ceremonial and presentation spears forged; silver,  
 [324] ivory and ostrich feathers procured for the making of

[301] bracelets and other ornaments; a hunting party has to make  
 incursions (either without the knowledge or with the conni-

• [237] vance of the government) upon a strictly protected species  
 of antelope in order to obtain the highly prized skins which

serve the purpose of purple and ermine in the installation  
 ceremonies. The forging of the sacred spears is introduced

[324] with special ceremony; with appropriate sacrifice new fire  
 by the immemorial method of the friction of hard wood upon

soft is made and the implements of the blacksmiths blessed.

643 There is great activity during this period of preparation  
 796 in Akurua in the north of the country, Nyikang's own

796 sacred village. It was from here that the hero-king dis-  
 778 appeared in a whirlwind from the sight of mortal man, and

775 it is to Akurua that he returns in order that he may go to  
 Fashoda to install his successor as reth. In the shrine at

Akurua are housed the sacred effigies of Nyikang and his  
 son, Dak, which are carried in procession from Akurua to

Fashoda for the installation. These effigies consist of heads of  
 ostrich feathers fixed in bamboo sockets, and are in fact

[237] fetishes, since the souls of Nyikang and Dak are believed to  
 inhabit them. On the death of a king the old effigies are

destroyed and new ones made for the installation of the  
 reth-elect.

643 When preparations at Fashoda are completed, messengers  
 796 are sent to Akurua to inform Nyikang that it is time to march

778 to Fashoda. The effigies are then carried out, borne aloft by  
 members of a clan whose special prerogative this is, and

[614] start on the journey to the capital, a distance of about  
 seventy miles. The procession moves south at a smart pace.

Dak's mop of feathers on the end of a long bamboo pole  
 looks like an oversized feather duster; Nyikang's head of

ostrich plumes is very much bigger than that of his son's,

- 643 awakened by a man calling out at my door; very sleepily  
 747 I asked what was the matter and he replied, 'The king is  
 sick and is calling for the Father to come to him.' The  
 man who called me was a nephew of the king and had  
 already given the king some instruction in the Faith as he  
 was well able to do—he is a catechist in our Derwot  
 mission. I first said Mass and after some breakfast set out  
 for Fashoda, a distance of some twelve miles. I was accom-  
 panied by the catechist and the local medical dispenser  
 who was also a Catholic. I had to walk, for the swamps  
 were full and the grass was very high. There was not a  
 breath of wind. Indeed it was a pleasure to wade through  
 the swamps for the cool water was very refreshing to tired  
 and hot feet. We pushed on fast and made only one stop  
 of about five minutes, whilst my escort had a drink. I  
 was offered milk, but as unboiled milk is very dangerous  
 in this country, I refused. When we arrived at Fashoda  
 the whole place had the silence of a sick room, no dogs  
 [195] barked and all the people spoke in whispers as is the  
 custom in Fashoda. I was taken at once to the king's  
 [644] dwelling, which is just the same as any other Shilluk  
 house, except that more care had been taken over its  
 construction. In the house were four women fanning the  
 king with the wings of a saddle-billed stork and the eldest  
 son of Papiti was there too. As soon as I entered the hut,  
 the king sat up and greeted me; he was lying on the  
 floor just like any other Shilluk, but he had a thin mattress  
 [5/3] on top of the usual cow-hide. He seemed very pleased to  
 see me and at once told the women to leave the hut and  
 I began the instruction. My task was easy for he knew  
 Catholic doctrine and believed it; he knew all the obliga-  
 tions of the Faith. When I put the question to him about  
 his wives he said, 'Father, my soul is the main thing now,'  
 and before witnesses he gave me his promise to be a man  
 of one wife. I baptised him 'Joseph' after our Patron, and  
 it was also the feast day of St. Joseph of Cupertino. He  
 received baptism with great devotion and gave me the  
 impression of understanding to the full the meaning of the

*Religion*

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a Bareth of the shrine before which the sacrifice is made. 782  
 The king or chief who is present and who dedicates the 787  
 offering stands by and leads public prayer to Nyikang for 725  
 the blessing sought. The meat of the sacrifice is eaten by all 262  
 present with special perquisites for the Bareth guardian of 735  
 the shrine. Care is taken when cutting up the meat not to  
 break any bones. These are collected and thrown into the  
 Nile. The horns are stuck in the ground in front of the shrine. 237  
 and the skin, scraped and cleaned, remains in the shrine as  
 a mat for the spirit that dwells therein.

When the new corn is cut, tithes are given to Nyikang. 243  
 Part of these belong to the Bareth and the remainder is 782  
 ground into flour and made into a thin porridge which is  
 poured on to the ground in front of and inside the shrine as  
 a libation to the residing spirit.